

First of a Series of The Sunday Times Stories BY BEATRICE FAIRFAX

The Story of the Missing Watchman

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NEW WORK FOR HUMANITY

Dear Readers of The Washington Times:

At the suggestion of a wise man I have begun a new kind of work. For years I have written "Advice to the Lovelorn" for the newspapers. I have answered questions of men and women concerning the affairs of their hearts.

Now I am going to do something more exciting than that. With the help of Miss Grace Darling I am going to take some of the most important episodes that come to me through the letters from the millions of readers of "Advice to the Lovelorn," make stories of them for The Washington Times, and Miss Darling and Basil Dickey will turn them into scenarios for motion pictures.

They will be produced as stories in The Times every Sunday, and during the week following the motion pictures will show the acting of the story.

It is so exciting to think of having your thoughts changed into actual moving human beings appearing before the public on the screen.

In my work in collaboration with Miss Darling in the motion pictures I shall try to give good advice, working as always with my one great motto, "Love makes the world go round."

BEATRICE FAIRFAX.

ON my arrival at the office one morning one letter on my desk appealed to me at once. It was written in a neat, business-like hand, and with a certain amount of agitation in the underlined "urgent" in one corner and "Please read" in another. It was a simple, human document:

"Dear Miss Fairfax:
"I am engaged to the watchman of the bank. Yesterday I met him on the street with another girl and he did not speak to me. What shall I do?"

"MAY RYAN,
"211 East 131st street."

I gave it a moment or two of thought and then returned to the rest of my mail with the idea of coming back to Mary Ryan's letter later after I had gotten a little more perspective on her trouble. I was half way through my mail when the new reporter whose desk was next to mine came in. Jimmy Barton brought a certain freshness and enthusiasm to his work which contrasted itself all through the city room. The office boys greeted him and the most blasé copy-reader on the paper looked up to meet Jimmy's wide, friendly, infectious grin.

"Morning, Miss Fairfax," said he. "Any question that needs a man's broad viewpoint than your Uncle James help you any?"

Then he hurried over to the city editor—Howard Barnes—and reported that a reformer had been struck New York for the police sergeant's book was as white and pure as the snow that would fall next January. A second later Mr. Barnes picked up his phone and Jimmy's extension phone sounded simultaneously.

Jimmy darted out with an air of excitement. An hour later Jimmy Barton came whirling into the office again with the cyclonic effect he always produced when he had a good story.

"Something doing in little old New York now," he remarked, as he passed my desk after reporting to the city editor. "Bank robbers got \$60,000 in the Bronx. And the watchman of the little old bank has disappeared."

He sat down at his machine and began hammering out a story. Mr. Barnes called to him: "Get out your story as fast as possible. We can't wait more than fifteen minutes."

A sudden clue. But my mind had focused suddenly on one point. The robbery had been in the Bronx and the watchman was missing. East 131st street was in the Bronx, too. Could there be any connection between Mary Ryan and that robbery?

Jimmy got up his copy with the speed of a good newspaperman and handed it to me. I glanced over the letter hastily. His keen face lighted up with the pleasure of a good newspaperman's story. He thought he was on the "inside" of a story.

"You'd better go along with Mr. Barton," said Mr. Barnes. "The watchman of the little old bank has disappeared. Jimmy Barton hurried me over to the subway in frantic speed.

"Let's talk it over," he said, when the Leifoez were in the car. "I've been at last fairly on our adventure. If your girl is the sweetheart of the missing watchman, we ought to get some story."

"If my girl is the sweetheart of the missing watchman, I hope we can bring some help," said Mr. Barton. "You're a fine newspaper woman, Miss Fairfax. I believe you'd rather help along a wedding than an extra."

"Of course, I would," I laughed. "How long do you think I could keep the faith and marry a man who is if I thought of them as copy? They're friends to me. I don't pretend to be a newspaper editor. I'm just a 'big sister' to trouble."

"By Jove! I guess about the only way a fellow could get you to notice him would be by making a few little tragedies of his own," laughed Jimmy Barton. "I'll try it sometime when we have a quiet day."

"Trying to get into trouble?" I asked. "No, I'm always in trouble. I have a natural affinity for that. I mean falling in love."

"And ask me to get you out?" I asked. "Even a woman, most of whose life centers about other people's stories, may enjoy having a little fun of her own in teasing a dapper youth like Jimmy Barton."

But at the end of our ride all our idle chatter was forgotten, for we came face to face with a real tragedy. Mary Ryan lived in one of a long row of red brick apartment houses out in the Bronx. We climbed four narrow flights of stairs and came at last to a door in the center of which was a placard on which was written, "Mrs. B. J. Ryan."

A moment later in answer to our rapping, a motherly-looking woman of about forty-five opened the door. We found ourselves in a plainly furnished little place just a step or two above actual poverty. On the window stood a slender girl of about twenty. Her heavy shoulders and the crumpled "extra" at her feet which reached the floor as rapidly as we had, told her story.

There was undoubtedly a connection between Mary Ryan's troubled question of the day before and the bank robbery which flashed its story in big headlines across the front page of our paper. Jimmy picked up the crumpled ball and smoothed it out. It took me just a second to read it:

"THIRTY THOUSAND DOLLAR BANK ROBBERY IN BRONX. WATCHMAN MISSING.

"Police Seeking for George McCabe, Trusted Employee."

for, but of course Mr. Barton is a reporter and what he wants is a story and a 'beat' for his paper. Do you think you can tell anything that will help us solve this mystery?"

"Oh, please help me find him," said Mary. "I hope he's all right. In a few moments she regained her self-control and told us her story."

Last week George got off from duty and took her to lunch. He came downtown to the wholesale millinery store where she was one of the trimmers and on that gala day Miss Ryan proudly went out for her noon meal on the arm of Mr. McCabe.

George was a nice looking chap and Mary always thrilled with joy when the other girls saw him come for her. He was so steady and dependable. On that particular day some people at a nearby table in the restaurant sat and stared at him.

At first Mary had merely glared in the clean, good looks that always attracted such favorable attention. Then she was so jealous, stirred, for the girl who was watching him had a cheap and flashy prettiness, and she seemed much more interested in George than in the girl who was watching him.

"I asked him if he knew them. Oh, Miss Fairfax, he said he didn't but that was the girl I saw him with later and he stared at me as if he'd never seen me before."

The rest of her story was quickly told. At 5 she left her place of employment and hurried home. She stopped in a neighborhood store to do an errand and presently she met George and the flashy looking girl she had seen in the restaurant.

Her lover had a heavy bandage about his throat, but he still wore his uniform and badge. He stared at her blankly and she stared at him. He had been in them no trace of interest.

"Think of it, Miss Fairfax. My George walked along next to that painted up girl and didn't even try to stop her. But whatever he did he was her fault, I'm sure. George never loved me. He loved that girl. Oh, won't you find him for me, Miss Fairfax?"

Mary Gives the Photograph. "Here's his photograph," cried Mrs. Ryan, pointing proudly to the picture of a good looking, well set up young chap, which occupied a place of honor on the mantle.

Jimmy studied the picture—then he asked Mary to lend it to him, and she tearfully consented. My first impulse was to protest—and then I remembered that Jimmy Barton had a plan. What it was I did not quite fathom, but I was sure it was a good one.

"Will you stay?" asked Mary eagerly. "If you don't hear from me by dark, come to the office," ordered Jimmy. "I'll be there. Thank you very much for the photograph."

Then he hurried out and left me to my own thoughts. I was sure that Mary Ryan would suffer tortures as she waited for word from Jimmy Barton, reporter and amateur sleuth.

"Oh, if he's only alive, Miss Fairfax—that's all I ask, just for him to be alive and well."

Hours passed and there was no word from Jimmy. I realized that Mary's strained and tortured nerves could no longer endure inaction. The only thing she was to do was to get out in the fresh air and walk over to the street on which she had met her lover and the mysterious young woman whose part in her life was so puzzling.

Coincidence is very often kind. We wandered up and down for almost half an hour, and just when Mary was beginning to yield to utter despair a young woman came out of a door. We entered a room which carried out in black letters. It read, "Dr. Schultz."

There seemed no particular reason for our entering a doctor's office. Mary walked unhesitatingly over to the door and turned the knob. It was distinctly a doctor's office of the type one finds in poor neighborhoods. There were charts and diagrams on the walls, and the table was covered with magazines. A great many shabby

chairs stood about the room, and the air was impregnated with the heavy, stale odor of iodine and other medicines. Later I had a hard time excusing myself for the sheer sympathetic folly which made me permit Mary to lead when she was so badly in need of a leader. We should have found a policeman before we entered into what might prove a lion's den as well as a doctor's office.

Mary had dropped on her knees and was peering through a keyhole which gave a view of the room into which we supposed the girl we were following had gone.

Miss Fairfax, that girl's in there and they've got a whole suitcase full of money. Do you suppose—she began, and then she interrupted herself suddenly and cried aloud with real joy, "George! Oh, I'm so glad I've found you!"

I turned and faced the young man to whom she was speaking. For a second his expression was one of blank uncertainty. Then he laughed coldly and cruelly which did not attempt to disguise itself.

Mary Is Caught. A second later the door of the inner room burst open, and in a quick panorama I saw the mysterious girl close the money-filled suitcase and realize that one of the biggest, most brutal looking men I had ever seen was fairly leaping into the room where Mary and I had so foolishly ventured.

He was followed by a man I knew at once must be Dr. Schultz. He held a sign on the door. There was a label on the door. I caught it. I rushed and rushed with her to the outer door. He looked at her and then he smiled so unpleasantly that it produced the effect of a snarl.

Mary Ryan's letter had brought me in to strange company. The big man caught Mary in his strong arms and dragged her into the inner room. A moment later the doctor and the man who looked like a kidnaper entered. The man who looked like a kidnaper entered. The man who looked like a kidnaper entered.

In a situation like that one always has a strange feeling of unreality. I kept telling myself that this absurd moment was a dream. But the truth was that I was in a real situation. I was in a real situation. I was in a real situation.

A Menacing Figure. But a moment later the grim reality of the situation forced itself on me. In a coarse, husky voice, without trace of culture or emotion, the man who looked like Mary's sweetheart was speaking: "They're after us at the office, too. We got to get out of town."

The "Doctor" nodded emphatically. The other two men and the girl seemed to be absolutely motionless. He gave his commands in a series of signals, which he jerked out roughly and which they obeyed without protest. The big man lifted the suitcase full of money and followed the pseudo watchman from the room. Then the "Doctor" turned and looked at us with a queer, slow smile which struck terror to my heart.

That look conveyed the unmistakable information that he hadn't quite finished with us—that people who blocked the game he was playing generally found him an opponent to be reckoned with.

He measured us coldly for a minute. I wanted to shriek out that I was Beatrice Fairfax and that my paper would avenge me—but I was not quite sure that it would be wise to reveal my identity to the sinister creature who had just taken my money.

A second later wonder gave way to dawning horror. The "Doctor" walked over to his medicine chest and took out a small bottle. He poured some dark crystals from the jar into the retort and then moistened the crystals with a few drops of liquid. At once a dense cloud of white vapor arose.

Blinded by Fumes. Then the "Doctor" covered his mouth and nose with his hand and plunged out of the room and away from the strangling fumes that were filling my lungs with a choking vapor and blinding my smarting eyes.

I sat in the deadly miasma that was bearing down upon me with a force that choked at once attracted to the door and into the heavily-laden door. I had set out to help Mary Ryan, but I was impotent even to reach out a comforting hand to the girl who had hidden from me somewhere in the poisonous white mist that swirled about us. "Mary!" I called.

There was no answer. When Jimmy Barton left Mary Ryan's home with the photograph which Mary had given him, she proceeded at once to the Rogues' Gallery.

He was convinced that there was



JIMMY SEIZED THE TELEPHONE—HE HAD FOUND THE WATCHMAN!

another man in the case—that George McCabe had a double somewhere in New York's underworld—and that a daring plot had been built on one of those resemblances which we think as odd.

A few minutes' search through the racks which decorate the walls of the gallery confirmed Jimmy's suspicion. Suddenly he found what he was searching for, a photograph almost as if it might have been of George McCabe.

I could Mary's lover be Dr. Schultz and Mr. Hyde? Jimmy dismissed his theory of dual personality a second later. When he had glimpsed the photograph from the rack and turned it about he found this record inscribed on it:

"Sam Defarge, alias Silent Sam, etc.: height, 5 feet 9 inches; dark hair and eyes; weight 135 pounds. Whereabouts unknown. Mother lives at 113 East 21st street."

Jimmy made a note of that address. He felt that "Silent Sam" would inevitably seek out his mother to confide in her the successful termination of his plot. If he were indeed he who had played so important a part as Mr. Barton suspected in the Bronx Bank robbery, he would be a wrinkled old hag.

Jimmy thought this the particular moment to employ a taxi. He had an idea that he might want to get away from 113 East 21st street even more rapidly than he got there—and he didn't propose to waste any time about that either!

Jimmy Investigates. He left his cab at the corner of 20th street, and bade his driver wait. Then he jammed his hands into his pockets, grinned profanely at the kid who was waiting for him, and rushed into the building which he hoped would be kindly enough to open for him. He was a few seconds toward the home of Mother Defarge.

It proved to be a tiny detached cottage, surrounded by heavy shrubbery. Jimmy was a little puzzled. The most insistent question in his mind was: Where in Jimmy Barton's mind was a woman with a door of a door? Jimmy came hurrying through a doorway which had a second before contained the wooden barrier of a door. I longed to lift the arms which were bound to my side and rub my eyes.

I thought, was the beginning of the end—the vision of the dying, who see what most they long to see. Jimmy got there neither as the vision of a distorted mind nor by any mysterious agency—but rather as the inevitable next step in the investigations he had begun at the Rogues' gallery and pursued at Mother Defarge's home.

"Silent Sam" made clear the mystery. "After John has tied up the watchman and brought him here to eat his heart out in the dark, goes and plays watchman, with a rag around my throat to look like I had a cold and to keep me from needing to give myself away on account of the natural difference in our voices. I sit on a stool near the door, and when the clerk who has the key comes to the door, I take it and open the door as easy as I please—and then I take the key and go back to my room. Some trick! Thirty thousand dollars because we got the trains to go and take it."

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appreciation of her son's story for which Jimmy felt duty thankful. "Oh, Mayme, she plays her ankle game on him. She stumbles and turns it after she slouched along after him. She pretends to fall. She knows he's just the sort that'll be sympathetic with a lady in trouble. He catches her. She pretends she can't walk and tells him she knows a good doctor what lives near by. He says he will help her, and she knows we've got him all right."

"Big John is waiting inside the door with a slingshot, and just as Mayme and her helpful friend start to ring the doctor's doorbell he jumps around the corner and hits the chap over the head. Then he picks him up easy-like he was a baby and carries him into the doctor's office."

Praise From Headquarters. "While our friend, the watchman, is still asleep from what John handed him, they lay him down on a couch and take off his uniform. Then they dress him up in suit of citizen's clothes and give me his uniform and badge. That was some cute trick—what do you say, mother?"

"I say you're a pretty smart boy," said Mother Defarge. "I am setting down the story just as Jimmy told it afterward, but Jimmy's mind was so full of the money and the plan that he couldn't make his way into cold type."

But this is the way he concluded the first part of his recital. "Now, the next thing this young sleuth wanted to know was, 'What have the Rogues got hidden away in the basement that they seem to think is so valuable?' Uncle Jimmy had better go down and see."

So he raised his hands above his head and let us see the clerk who had the key. He was a little more than a minute. The most insistent question in his mind was: Where in Jimmy Barton's mind was a woman with a door of a door? Jimmy came hurrying through a doorway which had a second before contained the wooden barrier of a door. I longed to lift the arms which were bound to my side and rub my eyes.

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sound of a body turning restlessly about. His attention wandered for a moment to a puzzled question as to the man in the basement. What was his condition?

Jimmy Finds Another Gun. Then Mr. Barton returned to the business at hand. He ordered Sam to turn about, and with the gun already in his possession pressed between the thief's shoulderblades, Jimmy searched his captive's hip pocket. A second later he stood holding a gun in each hand and reflecting whimsically that there didn't seem any special need for the trick he had learned out West from a friendly Indian—shooting with both hands simultaneously.

Mother Defarge was still crouched in her corner watching with evil flits the man who had overpowered her son. Her perverted mind was working automatically—she knew the heavy penalty which would overtake an escaped convict who was caught again in a crime of the very type which had earned him his previous sentence. She did not propose that Sam should be taken again.

Jimmy was intent on the man before him. Mother Defarge's moment had come. She raised her can and swung out with lightning-like rapidity and a force her skinny arm had not possessed. Under the impact of the blow the glass chimney of the lamp shivered to atoms and heavy black darkness mantled the room.

Automatically both of Jimmy's trigger fingers worked. Two shots rang out—and two spurts of fire pierced the black. But neither of them found a human mark. Sam had leaped through the doorway and dragged his mother after him.

A Sound in the Basement. A second later Jimmy struck a match and lighted the candle his mind had noted when Sam put it down. He stood in the dim light waiting—it never occurred to him that his opponent had gotten away leaving him master of the situation. But a moment later a sound from the basement claimed his attention. He listened—and the sound repeated itself; it seemed a call for help. Candle in hand, he went down into the ugly black damp of that sinister cellarway. Over in one corner lay a figure prone—and struggling. The candle light flickered and then flared up.

There was no doubt about it—this was the original of the photograph Jimmy had noted first in its place of honor on Mother Ryan's mantelpiece.

"I'm Jimmy Barton, of the Journal," said that redoubtable youth, "and you're George McCabe, the wide-eyed, frank and friendly. 'You're Barton, of the Journal—I got that much all right. Now give us the rest of it again, will you? About all I seem able to realize is that you've come along and saved me.'"

McCabe Is Astonished. McCabe gasped. His mind had never been trained in the school of newspaperdom—it could not work as fast as Jimmy's. For that matter, it could not even pretend to follow Jimmy's. But he had a pleasing grin—wide and frank and friendly. "You're Barton, of the Journal—I got that much all right. Now give us the rest of it again, will you? About all I seem able to realize is that you've come along and saved me."

Jimmy repeated his sketchy little story and threw in a few details for clearness. "Oh, yes, I know the house. I'll take you there," said George.

"No—my taxi'll take us."

It was rather lucky for Mary and me that Jimmy had kept that taxi. When Jimmy Barton came hurtling through the door of "Doctor" Schultz's like a human catapult I decided that the end of my brief stay on earth had come. Jimmy lost no time in seizing the boiling retort and hurling it out of the window.

He rushed over to the windows and flung them wide, letting in a flood of clean, blessed air bearing the pleasantly familiar Bronx odor of boiling cabbage and frying onions. They seemed like the thief aprons to his feet and slung about his head after the noxious fumes of that retort.

Some Sort of a Fight. Vaguely I knew that there had been some sort of a fight in the outer rooms. I heard shots and shouts—but they had meant nothing more to me.

When Jimmy told us the story of his adventures later down at the Journal I learned just how he had happened to appear at the opportune moment. Just after he had discovered and freed George McCabe from the clutches of the burglar and leaped into the waiting taxi.

They whirled over to the building where Mary and I were waiting—though both of them were tempted to stop at the Ryan home and reassure us as to

their safety, or, at least, telephone us some encouraging message. "But every minute counted," laughed Jimmy. "And even if it didn't seem so very polite to keep the ladies in suspense, we decided that when you were chasing thieves you couldn't stop to pay party calls."

The Conspirators Run Out. When the taxi in which George McCabe and Jimmy had been dashing around corners in the Bronx arrived at the street in which George remembered meeting Mayme, the chauffeur was commanded to slow down to a speed which would have won more approval from a traffic policeman than the one at which they had previously been going, and they halted the first two policemen they met, and enlisted their aid.

Just as they got to the doorway decorated by Dr. Schultz's card the conspirators came rushing out. At once the "Doctor" and Silent Sam pulled their guns. But one of the policemen knocked Sam senseless before he could shoot.

Two shots sounded simultaneously. Jimmy and the "Doctor" had fired at the same moment. Schultz's bullet went wild—but Jimmy's found its mark and the "Doctor" crumpled in a heap which lay silent and motionless—dead.

It was then that Jimmy found himself turned into a human catapult. Big John knocked the gun from his hand, picked him up bodily, and flung him into the air. Jimmy whirled through the air to rise from his daze a second later, and with a promptness which saved us from the fumes of the boiling retort.

The fight outside continued. "Mary, my girl!" cried George. "You're safe—and we've got the others. The policemen have handcuffed the lot—and your George has helped his bit toward getting back the money for the bank—so that's all right."

He was unfastening the knots which bound her to the chair as he spoke, and a second later she was clinging to him, laughing and crying and telling him all in one breath that she loved him and that she would never be again enough she'd written to Miss Fairfax.

"Beatrice Fairfax!" cried George almost incredulously. "I didn't think there was such a person—not a real lady anyhow, like you, ma'am."

"However, you see she's real now, don't you?" laughed Jimmy. "You're safe—and we've got the others. The policemen have handcuffed the lot—and your George has helped his bit toward getting back the money for the bank—so that's all right."

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